

therefore illegal. Late last month, however, a U.S. appeals court in Richmond reversed the lowercourt ruling that would have ended the practice of filling rivers and streams with waste rock and dirt from mountaintop removal coal mining operations.

There are far-reaching consequences of the Appellate Court's decision. The Administration's new definition of "fill material" is an attempt to legalize the dumping of countless tons of mountaintop removal coal mining waste—a practice that has already burned and destroyed 1,000 miles of Appalachian streams. The new rule also expressly allows hardrock mining waste, construction and demolition debris, and other types of harmful wastes to be dumped into rivers and streams across the country. Given the possible presence of contaminants such as heavy metals, asbestos, or harmful organic compounds in some of these wastes, the implementation of the new definition of "fill material" in the Corps' regulations could have disastrous impacts even beyond the harm caused by burying streams and other waterways. Congress meant for the Clean Water Act to protect our nation's water resources; the Administrative rule change endangers those resources.

The dangerous precedent set by the Administration's rule change undermines the Clean Water Act. This is why I have proposed the Clean Water Protection Act. This legislation would establish a definition for fill material in the Clean Water Act, such that no wastes could be used to bury our streams and wetlands. Creating a statutory definition of "fill material" that expressly excludes waste materials will end the need for further court proceedings and will clarify environmental law consistent with the purpose of the Clean Water Act—to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters.

Clean air and water are not partisan issues; they are issues of vital importance to all Americans. We cannot let the Clean Water Act fade into history as simply a "romantic ideal", but rather we must ensure the protection of our waters, so that our grandchildren have streams to play in and clean water to drink.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation to protect the quality and magnificent beauty of our nation's streams and wetlands.

COMMENDING ISRAEL ON THEIR ELECTIONS

SPEECH OF

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 11, 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution extending this body's congratulations to Israel on their recent elections. I stand with my colleagues and commend Israel as it continues to conduct democracy in a region filled with dictatorship and totalitarian regimes.

On January 28, 2003, nearly four million Israelis went to the polls to participate in the country's 15th national election since becoming a state in 1948. The election was Israel's 5th in the last decade, and comes at an extremely critical juncture in the country's short

history. An ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, a looming U.S. war against Iraq, the global war on terrorism, and a struggling Israeli economy all played pivotal roles in the campaign. But when all was said and done, Israelis reelected Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and established a near majority for the Likud Party in the Israeli Knesset. Prime Minister Sharon's victory was especially significant, as it was the first time in 25 years that Israelis reelected a sitting Prime Minister.

As the sole democracy in the Middle East, Israel is the most reliable ally of the United States in the region. I come to the floor today and further express my commitment to a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. Israel has stood by the U.S. in our war on terrorism, and we shall stand with Israel as it continues down the daunting road toward peace and security. Terrorism never has been, and never will be, an ingredient to peace in the Middle East, and the U.S. must stand by Israel in its efforts to protect its borders and its citizens.

Mr. Speaker, each of us has his or her own unique way of expressing our support for Israel and the relationship that the U.S. enjoys with the small Middle Eastern country. Coming to the floor today in support of this resolution is just one way Members can show their support. Traveling to Israel is another. I make my commitment today to visit Israel sometime during the 108th Congress to show my support for the Jewish state, and I urge my colleagues to make similar commitments.

Israel is a place rich with history. It is filled with beauty and its people are filled with kindness and generosity. Members of Congress can make no stronger statement of their support for Israel than to travel there and experience first hand the issues facing Israeli leaders attempting to make peace. I am looking forward to the trip that I am co-hosting over the Memorial Day recess with black and Jewish Members, and I do hope that my colleagues will make similar statements of their support. Only next time, we make them in the streets of a peaceful Jerusalem.

CELEBRATING AFRICAN AMERICAN MONTH

HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and all the black members of Congress that have served this Nation. As America observes African American History Month, I would be remiss not to remember the giants of this institution who made it possible for me to stand before you today. In the 212 years of Congressional History, there has been only 108 black Members of Congress: 104 elected to the House and 4 to the Senate.

In the great State of Florida there have been five black Members of Congress and I have the distinctive honor to serve as one of them.

I want to commend your attention to the first black Member of Congress elected from the State of Florida, Josiah Thomas Walls.

Congressman Josiah Thomas Walls was the only black representative from the State of Florida before reconstruction. He was born,

probably to slavery, in or near Winchester, Virginia, on December 30, 1842. As a child, Josiah Walls moved to Darksville in what is now West Virginia. Josiah Walls briefly attended the county normal school in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and may have received additional education. As a Congressman, Josiah Walls described his impressions into the Confederate army and his capture by Northern forces at the siege of Yorktown, Virginia, in May 1862. By July 1863 he had entered the Third Infantry Regiment, United States Colored Troops at Philadelphia, becoming a corporal in October. Josiah Walls moved with his regiment to Florida in February 1864. After his discharge in October 1865 he worked at a sawmill on the Suwannee River and later taught at Archer in Alachua County.

In 1867, Josiah Walls was elected to represent Alachua County at the 1868 Florida Constitutional Convention. The county convention of March 1868 also nominated Josiah Walls for the state assembly. He was elected, taking his seat in June. Later that same year he was elected to the state senate from the Thirteenth District and took his seat the following January. Josiah Walls participated in several national conventions held to discuss problems facing blacks. At the Southern States Convention of Colored Men in 1871 he proposed an amendment to a resolution of support for President Ulysses S. Grant, which called on the Republicans to nominate John Mercer Langston for Vice President in 1872.

In August 1870, Florida Republicans nominated Walls for the state's lone seat in the House of Representatives. Walls appeared to win a narrow election victory and presented his credentials to the Congress on March 4, 1871. He accepted assignments to the Committee on Militia, the Committee on Mileage, and the Committee on Expenditures in the Navy Department.

Congressman Walls put forth several proposals and spoke on a variety of subjects. Since he feared public education would receive little attention if it were administered by southern states, he supported a measure to establish a national educational fund financed with money from public land sales. He introduced bills for the relief of private pensioners and Seminole War veterans. He strongly favored expenditures for internal improvements in Florida and supported efforts to grant belligerent status to rebels fighting in Cuba for independence from Spain, which still permitted slavery to exist on the island.

After a disputed election and defeat for renomination to the House, Josiah Walls took an indefinite leave of absence from public service.

Upon his return to Alachua County, Josiah Walls owned and operated a successful tomato and lettuce farm, sawmill and orange groves. He also remained interested in political developments. He slipped into ill health and lost his fortune when a February 1895 freeze ruined his crops. Shortly thereafter he was placed in charge of the farm at Florida Normal College (now Florida A&M University). He died in Tallahassee on May 15, 1905.

As a great writer once penned, "God will not let us fall . . . For our work is good, We hope to plant a nation, Where none before hath stood." Congressman Josiah Walls planted a nation for other African Americans to follow.